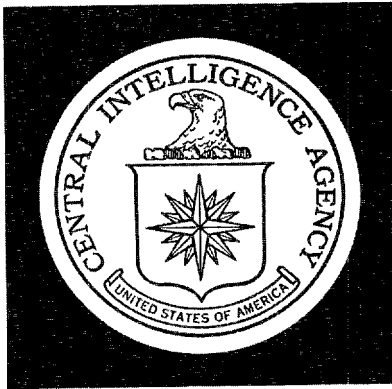


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State Department review completed

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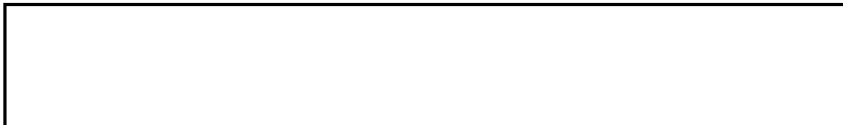
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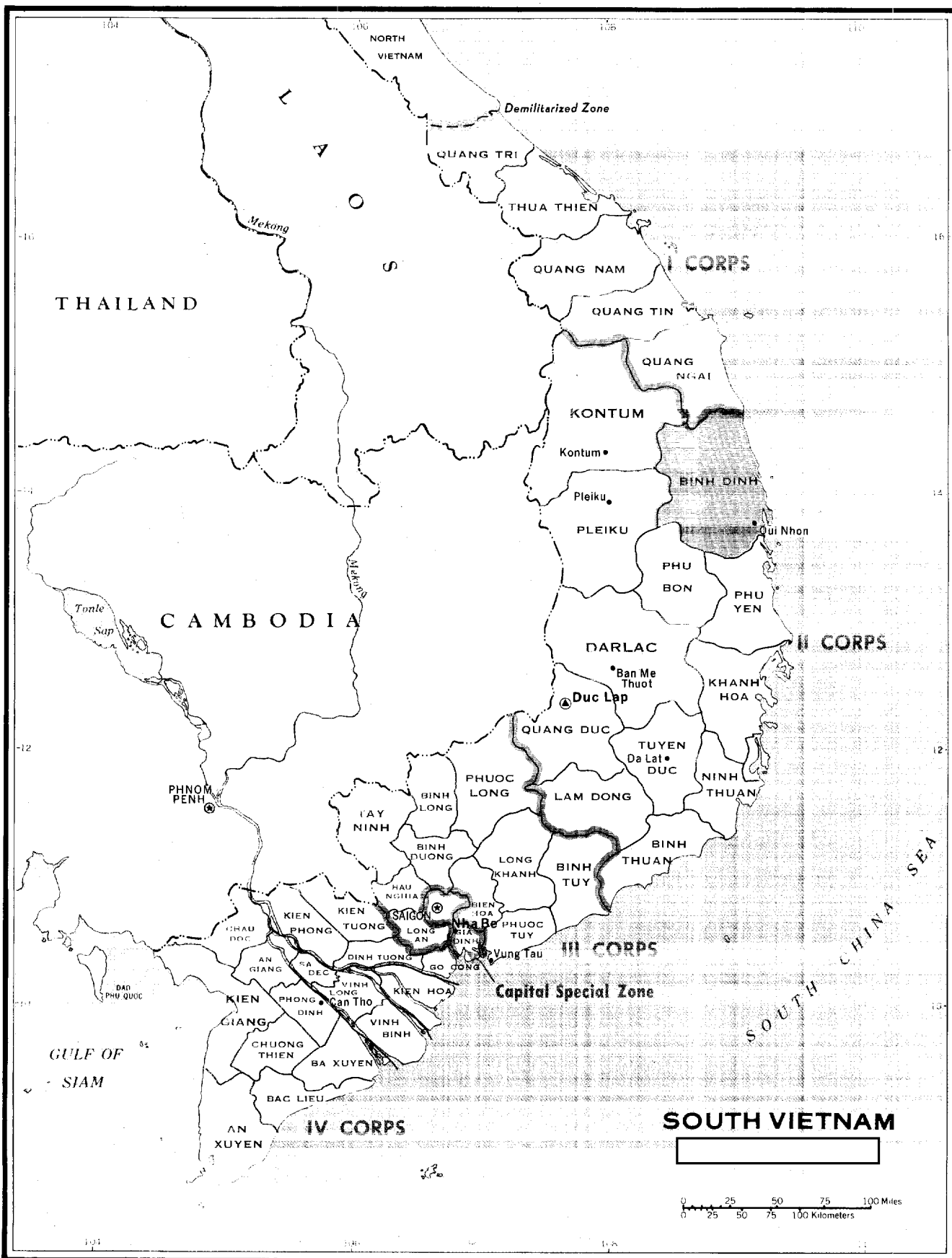
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[South Vietnam: Communist military activity tapered off throughout the country on 23-24 September.

Scattered ground clashes were reported in the II Corps area, primarily around Duc Lap Special Forces camp in the southern highlands and along the central coast in Binh Dinh Province where allied contact with the North Vietnamese 18th Regiment continued for the third day.

There were 13 enemy bombardments in the III Corps area, including a predawn rocket attack on the large Nha Be fuel storage depot south of Saigon. This was the first rocket attack in the capital area in more than a month, and resulted in only light damage.

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Thailand: Anti-American sentiment appears to be growing in some influential circles in Bangkok.

US Embassy officials received an unprecedented tongue lashing from a group of young Thai journalists during an informal gathering last month. The journalists zeroed in on the "objectionable" behavior of Americans in Thailand; they also expressed distaste for US policy in Asia. Their assertions that such views were common among students in Bangkok were subsequently supported by a Thai employee of the embassy.

Although problems resulting from the large US presence have received considerable attention in the Thai press over the past year, criticism has generally been muted. The volume may be increasing, however, as political activity steps up in the four months that remain before legislative elections.

An unusual aspect of the meeting between the journalists and the US officials is that a vivid account of it, favorable to the journalists, appeared in a newspaper owned by Deputy Prime Minister Praphat. It may be that Praphat, who has been organizing a political party with the help of some well-known leftists, is taking preliminary steps to show that the government shares some of the dissenters' views. Praphat may hope in this way to blunt the impact of anti-American sentiment on the elections. [REDACTED]

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Israel - Arab States: Border incidents continue to draw Israeli protests, and the Arab states are looking nervously to their defenses.

Israel has again gone to the UN Security Council to protest an alleged cross-canal foray by the Egyptians in which one Israeli soldier was reported wounded. Israel's resort to the UN and its failure so far to launch a strong retaliatory strike against Egypt or Jordan are unusual, given the accumulation of unavenged Israeli casualties suffered on both borders over the past month.

Arab nervousness over an eventual Israeli military strike remains high, [REDACTED]

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Sierra Leone: Political and tribal passions are again being fanned as the country prepares for important parliamentary by-elections.

Prime Minister Stevens announced in a nationwide radiobroadcast on 23 September that his northern-dominated regime had quelled a serious outbreak of political violence in the south over the weekend. The disturbance, which took place in a stronghold of the opposition Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), apparently occurred when SLPP politicians called a mass meeting to select party candidates for the three-stage by-elections beginning in October. The by-elections, which will fill nearly one third of the parliamentary seats, became necessary when the seats formerly held by the SLPP were vacated through government-initiated court actions.

The national attention given the disturbance suggests that the Stevens government intends to continue its campaign to crush the SLPP as a political force. In August, police dispersed several hundred SLPP partisans who had gathered in Freetown to present their grievances to the governor general. The government may soon crack down on the two remaining pro-SLPP Freetown newspapers.

As the elections approach, continued use of heavy-handed methods by the government or any election irregularities could inflame the unrest among SLPP supporters, the majority of whom are southern Mende tribesmen. The Mendes are already angry over government charges of treason against more than a dozen prominent fellow tribesmen.

Stevens has strengthened his position since the army mutiny catapulted him into office in April, but he still cannot depend on the loyalty of the unruly and still essentially leaderless army, which is also divided along tribal lines. Should widespread disorders occur, the army would have difficulty suppressing them and might again attempt to seize power.

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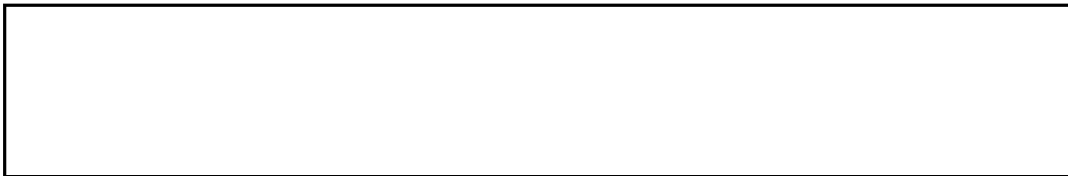
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Panama: National guard Commandant Vallarino is still resisting pressure from president-elect Arias to step down.

Arias apparently intends to make a shift in the guard leadership on inauguration day, 1 October, when the top officers are legally required to submit their resignations to the incoming president. Arias says he will replace Vallarino with third commandant Urrutia, who would probably be acceptable to the guard.



The guard chief probably realizes that he must go, but may hope to negotiate some commitment from Arias that would preclude a wholesale shake-up of the guard and preserve some of his political influence.



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NOTES

USSR-Czechoslovakia: One of the three divisions from the Soviet Southern Group of Forces which moved into Czechoslovakia during the intervention evidently returned to its garrisons in Hungary between 12 and 20 September. In addition, part of a Soviet airborne division may have been airlifted from Czechoslovakia to the USSR between 10 and 15 September. There is no firm evidence that any other Soviet divisions are preparing to withdraw.

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Iraq-USSR: A military delegation headed by Iraq's chief of staff arrived in Moscow on 21 September to discuss acquisition of additional military equipment. The Iraqis will try to get accelerated delivery of materiel ordered under old agreements and will present new requirements, presumably for a wide range of equipment. The visit was originally scheduled for late July but was postponed, apparently because of the coup in Baghdad that month. [REDACTED]

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Bolivia: Imposition of export controls last week by the International Tin Council will intensify Bolivian criticism of the US surplus tin disposal program. The controls were imposed in an attempt to stabilize the price of tin, which has fallen from \$1.76 per pound in 1966 to \$1.43 currently. The export controls probably will preclude expansion of Bolivian tin production and be used as an excuse to close some high-cost mines. Although the closings would benefit the Bolivian state tin mining enterprise financially, increased unemployment among the volatile tin miners could add to political instability. [REDACTED]

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Dominican Republic: Juan Bosch plans to return from his self-imposed exile in Spain "very soon," according to the secretary general of the ex-president's Dominican Revolutionary Party. Bosch was quoted as urging all party members to remain loyal to the present leadership until he is there to assume command. Meanwhile, Bosch will begin a trip to Rumania and Yugoslavia in early October. He had also intended to go to the USSR, but in response to pressure from his party, canceled that part of his plan as a protest against the invasion of Czechoslovakia. [REDACTED]

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